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**Vhodné využití studijních strategií pro zvýšení  
pravděpodobnosti úspěchu vysokoškolských studentů při  
absolvování zkoušek**

**The Appropriate Utilization of Test Taking Strategies to  
Increase Undergraduate Students' Exam Success**

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- 2) analýza problémů, se kterými se studenti potýkají před a během zkoušení
- 3) zpracování přehledu vhodných strategií a přístupů, které pomohou studentům uspět při absolvování zkoušek.

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**Anotace:**

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá obtížemi, s kterými se studenti setkávají během testů ze čtení v rámci studia anglického jazyka na vysoké škole. Práce obsahuje teoretickou a praktickou část. První část se skládá z analýzy základní dovedností a strategií, které jsou zásadní pro efektivní čtení a úspěšné zvládnutí testů. Druhá část obsahuje výzkum, který vychází z načerpaných poznatků z odborné literatury. Výzkum se zaměřuje na zkušenosti studentů ze zvládání testů ze čtení na vysoké škole. Snahou praktické části bylo zmapovat studentské postoje k testům a dále zanalyzovat strategie a dovednosti, které studenti využívají při práci na úkolech zaměřených na testování dovedností ve čtení.

**Klíčová slova:** dovednosti a strategie, čtení, EFL (angličtina jako cizí jazyk), testovací úkoly

**Abstract:**

This Bachelor Thesis deals with difficulties which the students encounter during tests in reading within the study of the English language at higher education system. The thesis contains theoretical and practical part. The first part includes the analysis of skills and strategies which are essential for effective reading and successful completion of tests. The literature findings create the basis for the research that is described in the second part of this thesis. The research focuses the students' experiences in tests in reading at higher education system. The aim of the practical part was to map the students' approaches to tests and to analyze strategies and skills which the students employ during taking tests.

**Key words:** skills and strategies, reading, EFL (English as a foreign language), testing-tasks

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	10
2. Skills and strategies.....	11
2.1. General skills .....	11
2.1.1. Study Skills .....	12
2.2. General Strategies .....	15
2.2.1. Study strategies .....	16
3. Effective reading.....	18
3.1. Critical reading at university .....	20
3.2. Reading Skills and Strategies .....	21
3.2.1. Skimming and Scanning.....	21
3.2.2. Reading speed and comprehension .....	23
3.2.3. Identifying meaning from the context.....	24
3.2.3.1. Punctuation clues.....	24
3.2.3.2. Definition clues .....	25
3.2.3.3. Contrast and comparison clues.....	25
3.2.3.4. Structural clues .....	26
3.2.3.5 Framework based clues.....	27
3.2.4. Making inferences.....	28
3.2.5. Utilizing non-text information.....	29
4. Test-taking strategies at higher education.....	30
4.1. General test-taking strategies.....	30
4.2. Test-taking strategies in examinations in reading.....	31
4.2.1. Multiple choice .....	31
4.2.2. True/false tasks .....	32
4.2.3. Matching tasks .....	33
4.2.4. Gapped text tasks .....	34
4.3. Assessment of reading competence .....	35
5. Investigative project.....	38
5.1. Aims of the research.....	38

5.2. Participants of the research.....	39
5.3. Methodology.....	39
5.4. Structure of the questionnaires .....	40
5.5. Results from the questionnaires.....	41
5.5.1. Students' attitudes to reading tests.....	41
5.5.2. Students' behaviour before reading a text.....	43
5.5.3. Students' behaviour during a test.....	44
5.5.4. Students' behaviour after a test.....	47
6. Conclusion.....	50
7. References .....	52
8. Appendices .....	55



## **Graphs**

Graph 1: Students' attitudes towards tests in reading .....	41
Graph 2: Students' strategies employed before reading a text .....	44
Graph 3: Common difficulties in tests .....	45
Graph 4: .Reading strategies employed during reading a text .....	46
Graph 5: Students' attitudes towards revising the tests.....	47

# 1. Introduction

Study at university represents an important step in everyone's life; it opens doors for personal growth as well as future careers and equips young people with better qualification for the labour market.

However, first year students have to adjust to a new academic environment, which is different from the previous educational institutions. The adaptation to the higher educational system is challenging for most students as the students have to fulfil a lot of difficult academic requirements such as participation in discussions at seminars, responding to professional literature, compiling seminar works, etc. In addition, EFL (*English as a foreign language*) students have to acquire the language competence at an academic level as well.

The EFL students encounter various learning tasks in a variety of subjects such as writing essays, making presentations, comprehending academic texts or taking exams. However, some learning tasks can be really challenging. Some of the most common difficulties are meeting deadlines when submitting essays, comprehending the subject matter of the course, developing effective exam techniques or students' concentration span, etc. The successful completion of student's study program depends on coping with all these tasks in an efficient way.

This Bachelor thesis focuses on how university students' are prepared for EFL tests, in particular for the reading part. The aim of the thesis is to map the students' approaches to testing in reading and their ways of managing the tests. Moreover, it investigates whether the students are aware of test-taking strategies and are able to apply them effectively.

## 2. Skills and strategies

In order to cope with all the requirements a university study demands, the students have to perform various study skills. The appropriate use of study skills needs effective strategies. What do the skills and strategies mean? What are their functions?

### 2.1. General skills

General skills are defined as “the capability to carry out certain activities. They are influenced by congenital dispositions (abilities) to a certain degree but they are achieved on the basis of received knowledge from learning and practising certain activities. General skills are received dispositions to use knowledge. It is an obtained aptitude that allows carrying out a certain operation properly and effectively”<sup>1</sup> (Podlahová et al 2012, 139). General skills that are applicable to a variety of functions include for example: intellectual skills, sensorimotor skills, etc.

Geist points out that if the skills are not practised, they weaken or later even vanish. Contrary to that, the systematic use of the skills leads up to obtaining dynamic stereotypes, habits, formation chains of connected operations. The skills are not acquired fluently and cumulatively, but miscellaneously and unpredictably (2000, 46).

According to Telcová the skills are acquired during the whole life. Unless they are used frequently, they weaken or become extinct. On the contrary, the skills which are used frequently are bound to improve and to enhance the work performance.

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<sup>1</sup> Způsobilost člověka k provádění určité činnosti. Jsou podmíněny do jisté míry vrozenými předpoklady (vlohami), ale dosahuje se jich na základě vědomostí získaných učením a výcvikem v příslušných činnostech, jsou to získané dispozice pro užití vědomostí, je to cvikem získaná pohotovost ke správnému a efektivnímu vykonávání určité činnosti.“ Do angličtiny přeloženo autorkou bakalářské práce.

Telcová (2002) also adds that in order to understand the basis of the functions of skills it is important to take two fundamental aspects into account. The first parameter indicates how deep the skill is acquired which is shown in its quality and speed during its use. For instance, the amount and characteristics of mistakes which are made while performing a skill. The second parameter shows the scope of skills. In other words, it presents the number of skill variations which are acquired (74-75).

An example of these parameters can be demonstrated on a skill of driving a car. The first parameter shows how deeply a car driver acquired the skill, in other words how he or she is skilful in driving a car. The second parameter demonstrates how the skill is used. For example, whether a driver is able to drive during the night, in a bad weather condition etc. The skills which the students perform in the field of study are called study skills.

### 2.1.1. Study Skills

Study skills are “abilities, techniques, and strategies which are used when reading, writing or listening for study purposes. For example, study skills needed by university students studying from English-language textbooks include: adjusting reading speeds according to the type of material being read, using the dictionary, guessing word meanings from context, interpreting graphs, diagrams and symbols, note-taking and summarizing” (Jordan 1997, 6). Jordan also considers study skills as mechanical aspects of study.

Morgan understands skills, in the same way as Jordan, as a certain tool students use to manage learning tasks. He says that „the term study skill is a common expression which has generally been used to refer to technique of studying such as note-taking, underlining, summarizing and so on. Interesting as these techniques are, they represent relatively superficial and peripheral aspects of the activity. To see

these techniques as skills in themselves is misleading, for this has the effect of isolating them from the student's thinking about the context of the study task of which they form part" (1991, 120).

As emerged from the Morgan's definition, study skills are techniques of studying which the student employs for learning. However, Morgan emphasizes that these techniques form only a part of completing the study task. Basically, the student needs to consider how to accomplish or acquire the study skill by means of appropriate techniques.

Jordan claims that if the students build and acquire good study skills within a complete process during the first years of studies, afterwards these skills can be further developed throughout the whole life. At the moment of entering university, many EFL students have already possessed study skills they needed to complete the learning tasks. However, for EFL students it is important to adjust them into the requirements of the English language studies (1997, 5).

According to Chastain a study skill, in the same way as a general skill, is acquired within a complete process that includes three stages. The first one is called *cognitive* stage when an image of the skill is formed in the mind. The second stage is *associative* when the students are able to come up with a strategy needed for performing a particular skill. At the last level, called *autonomous*, the students develop the ability, which allows them to use the skill automatically and quickly (1988, 39).

This process can be demonstrated on the example of *taking notes at lectures*. In the first stage, the student learns how to write down the notes effectively. In the second stage, the student has already acquired the skill and now he or she practises taking notes in lectures. The student keeps practising the skill until he or she is

confident about taking notes effectively and appropriately. In the last stage, the student is able to take notes effectively and without any hesitations. While going through all these stages the student becomes an expert in using a learned skill.

As it was mentioned before, the study skills can be developed and improved during the whole life. For example, among the first study skills, which are acquired at elementary school, are the abilities to read and write. Afterwards, these study skills are deepened because the students have to cope with more demanding tasks.

University students are supposed to become independent learners, find appropriate approaches to learning and refine study skills, which are necessary at higher education system. At this level the students, according to Price et al., have to possess specific study skills such as:

- *taking notes*: These include the ability to take notes effectively so that the students are able to understand their notes and use them for revision.
- *learning from lectures*: These include the ability to obtain as much useful information as it is possible from lectures. The students should be also able to concentrate properly, think critically etc.
- *working in groups*: This means the ability to work with colleagues in order to complete some learning tasks.
- *making presentations*: These consist of the ability to make a good presentation which comply with all necessary academic formalities.
- *test-taking skills*: These include the ability to prepare for exams effectively so that the students are able to achieve the best results in tests (5, 2010).

Nevertheless, an appropriate use of study skills is not achieved unless the students employ proper study strategies. As Průcha et al. emphasizes “by means of an appropriate strategy the student decides which skill he or she is going to use and in which order”<sup>2</sup> (2001, 239).

## 2.2. General Strategies

Strategy is “a plan, method, or series of manoeuvres or stratagems for obtaining a specific goal or result: a strategy for getting ahead in the world”<sup>3</sup> (Wiggins, 2013).

The term strategy has its roots in the warrior terminology. The expression *strategy* comes from the Greek word *strategos*, the art of the general, which means military planning of a campaign. According to Wiggins the strategy can be “the utilization, during both peace and war, of all of nation’s forces, through large-scale, long-range planning and development, to ensure security or victory”<sup>4</sup> (2013).

However, through the time the term *strategy* has expanded into many areas due to an increasing progress in new technologies and also due to social changes. These days the warrior strategy is not used as frequently as it was in the past and the concept has been slightly transformed into a term which is called *grand strategy*. This means “the proper planning and utilization of the entire resources of a society military, technological, economic, and political”<sup>5</sup> (Goodman, 2013).

The effective use of strategy helps the students to achieve the goals and to get over the obstacles. Strategies are employed in many fields such as sports, business,

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<sup>2</sup> „Jelikož s pomocí vhodné strategie, žák rozhoduje, které dovednosti a v jakém pořadí správně použije.“ Do angličtiny přeloženo autorkou bakalářské práce.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from: <<http://www.teachthought.com/learning/the-difference-between-learning-strategies-and-skills/>>

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from: <<http://www.teachthought.com/learning/the-difference-between-learning-strategies-and-skills/>>

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from: <<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/strategy-and-tactics-military>>

games, war etc. Wiggings demonstrates the practical use of the strategy in the concrete example in sport, namely soccer. The goal is winning the game against the other team. The strategy, which he presents, is that the team will have to constantly push their opponents to the outside, and do not give the other team any chance for creating dangerous offense behind their team (2013).

Thus, it is not only essential to know how to play the soccer well but also to have the ability to think about the strategy which will be used in order to win the match. In addition, “the athlete or student, in other words, has to not only play well but think like the coach, the general”<sup>6</sup> (Wiggins 2013). Sportsmen, soldiers, business people and students should all know how to solve some situations by means of effective strategies.

The students set their goals, literally learning goals, during their studies. And only the choice of good strategies enables the students to achieve their goals. These strategies are technically called study strategies.

### 2.2.1. Study strategies

Study strategies help students apply study skills appropriately and effectively in order to accomplish learning tasks. Students choose study strategies as tools for completing tasks as well as learning goals which they set during their studies.

Jordan defines strategies as “the ways in which learners try to understand remember new information, e. g. techniques for learning new words in a foreign language” (1997, 95). Another definition which understands strategies from the point of view of remembering processes describes them as “operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval, and use of information” (Oxford 1990, 8).

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from: <<http://www.teachthought.com/learning/the-difference-between-learning-strategies-and-skills/>>



In courses of systems of higher education studies, the students have to use a lot of study strategies which differ according to their fields of study. However, some study strategies are essential and can be applied to any course at university. These strategies can be:

- *organizing strategies*: These include strategies which help the students to organize time effectively so that they have enough time to complete their learning tasks but they also have leisure time to maintain a healthy life style.
- *note taking strategies*: These consist of strategies which enhance the students' efficiency in taking notes during lectures, seminars, etc.
- *team strategies*: These contain strategies which enable students to cooperate together in groups.
- *test-taking strategies*: These include strategies which students employ in tests and examinations. An effective use of test-taking strategies helps students to get over the difficulties in tests and examinations. Test taking strategies are crucial and important during taking examinations at university.
- *reading a text*: These include strategies which enable the students to read more effectively (Price et al, 2010).

Test-taking strategies are generally the most important for students in order to be successful in completion tests as well as continuation of their studies. College tests focusing on testing EFL students usually include tasks in reading. Thus, students have to employ certain reading strategies that would enable them to read effectively and successfully pass tests.

### 3. Effective reading

The ability to read effectively is an indispensable part of studies at higher education system. Reading “is an active, fluent process which involves the reader and the reading material in building meaning. Meaning does not reside on the printed page, nor is it only in the head of the reader. A synergy occurs in reading which combines the words on the printed page with the reader’s background knowledge and experiences” (Anderson 1999, 1).

Reading is a dynamic process which is developed during the whole life. Generally, reading skills which the students acquired at lower education systems are not sufficient at university. The students have to adjust and upgrade them for higher education system. In other words, the students are required to transform their present knowledge during reading academic texts by means of logical thinking (Price et al 2010, 233).

In order to accomplish learning tasks such as reading difficult academic articles, it is essential to appraise the student’s approach to reading. Price et al. (2010) presents two approaches to reading – *deep* and *superficial*.

Deep approach to reading involves the ability to think about the text critically. In addition, the students who acquire deep approach to reading can adapt it to various texts, understand the gist and make their own opinions about the text.

On the contrary, superficial approach to reading means that the students just read the text but do not focus on the details in reading. As a result, the students do not have to understand the gist of the text. In this case, reading is not effective enough so the students can find difficulties in completing reading tasks. Thus, the students should use deep approach to reading at university.

Reading skills are developed, in the same way as general skills, progressively. The following scheme presents the process of acquiring reading skills from the beginner reader to the critical reader.

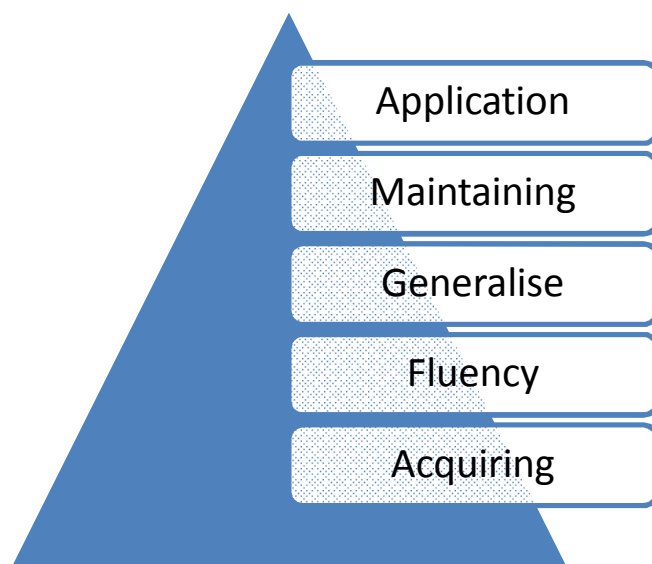


Illustration 1: Acquiring of reading skills  
Adapted from Price et al, 239

Reading literacy is acquired in the first stage which means that the students learn to read. In the second stage, the students focus on the fluency in reading. In the third stage, the students practise the ability to read different types of texts. In the fourth stage, the students do not acquire new techniques in reading but keep practising reading in order to maintain the skill. In the last stage, the students are able to apply their knowledge to a new context. This means that the students are flexible in adjusting to new texts and the students are able to exploit a lot of new information from the text. If the students manage to go through all these stages, they become critical readers (Price et al 2010, 239). The university students are supposed to have achieved the last step and to reinforce it.

### 3.1. Critical reading at university

Critical reading means that a reader is able to think about the arguments, which are stated in a text and to apply certain approaches to reading in general. This is based on reader's interaction with the text. In addition, readers who are able to read critically are flexible in reading which means that they can adapt to different texts. They can cope not only with easy literacy such as extracts from novels but also with reading more difficult texts, for example professional articles.

A critical reader is able to take control over the read text and also employs the information which appears in the text. According to Price a critical reader has to possess specific skills such as:

- flexibility of working
- ability to question
- ability to analyse the information
- capacity for independent thought
- an interactive approach to information and resources

(Price et al 2010, 266).

Basically, the students who approach the texts critically are likely to become critical readers. Price says that the students should not only read to get certain information, but they should also search for different ways of thinking about the topic (2010, 268).

The ability to read critically leads the students to an in-depth understanding of read text. In order to read effectively, the students need to acquire reading skills by means of reading strategies. Which reading skills do the students have to perform?

## 3.2. Reading Skills and Strategies

Effective use of reading skills enables the students to succeed in all academic assignments at university. The students need to use certain reading strategies and accomplish reading skills through them (Anderson 1999, 1). Some important reading skills and strategies, which the students need to perform at university, are *scanning and skimming, reading speed and comprehension, identifying meaning from the context, making inferences and utilizing non-text information*.

### 3.2.1. Skimming and Scanning

The basic skills that the students need to know not only in tests but also in reading in general are skimming and scanning. Some students encounter difficulties in finding some general or specific information from texts. If the students develop their reading strategies in skimming and scanning, they will save a lot of time in completing all tasks. Furthermore, they carry out reading tasks more effectively.

Skimming is “reading quickly for the general idea of meaning.”<sup>7</sup> Anderson claims that „skimming is one way to look for the main idea in a reading. When we skim, we read over parts of the text very quickly. We don’t read every word, or stop to look up words we don’t understand, we skim quickly just to get the gist of what something is about,, (1999, 72).

In order to comprehend the text quickly and have an overview over the content, the students perform skimming. Anderson points out that the students should avoid reading word by word as it slows them down. In addition, the students should not consult new words in the dictionaries all the time because then they cannot deeply concentrate on reading and their thinking is repeatedly interrupted (Anderson 1999, 72).

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from: <<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/scanning>>

Skimming becomes effective when the students just glance at the text and identify the gist of the text, certain facts and also any illustrations or graphs which are included in the text. Therefore, it is essential to look at the text as a whole and to avoid stopping in details. Otherwise, they will not have enough time to complete the reading task during skimming.

Unlike skimming, scanning means „glancing rapidly through a text either to search for a specific piece of information (e. g. a name, a date) or to get an initial impression of whether the text is suitable for a given purpose” (Nuttall 1982, 34). When the students scan the text, it is essential to read the text quickly and find specific information in a short time. In order to scan for some information, the students have to acquire scanning strategy.

According to Orr, scan for some information “involves running eyes down each page and taking note of any terms in bold-face print or italics, section headings, graphs and charts” (Orr 1992, 55). Orr points out the difference between role of eyes and mind during reading. The students use their eyes as collectors of information, while the mind is used for registering and analysing it. Thus, the students should be very alert and active while they are reading the text. During scanning the students are not supposed to understand the whole text but they should be able to find specific information. A practical sample of performing scanning can be demonstrated in the following example.

Skimming and scanning form an important part in reading process, which the students employ not only during exams in reading but also in daily life, for example reading e-mails, newspaper articles etc. Both scanning and skimming are based on speed rate.

### 3.2.2. Reading speed and comprehension

The EFL students have to face up to a lot of challenging academic reading tasks during examinations in reading. Some students encounter difficulty in completing the tasks on time. Generally, the students' reading speed is slowed due to incomprehension of the text. In order to understand the text completely, the students read the text slowly and repeatedly. Therefore, they do not have enough time to read the whole text and accomplish the tasks as well.

According to Nuttall (1982) the time which is required to read the text properly depends on two aspects. The first aspect is the text's linguistic difficulty. For instance, reading an extract of a novel should be easier for comprehension than reading a scientific article.

The second aspect is the density of the information the text contains. Nuttall explains that "a text is dense when the minimum number of words expresses the maximum amount of information. A dense text is usually more difficult to follow than one which presents information in a more extended way" (1982, 35).

These two aspects lead to the fact that the students slow down their reading speed or even stop reading the text to think about the meaning of words or look up unknown words in a dictionary. As the result, the students are often stressed and even discouraged from reading texts.

Reading speed and comprehension of the text are closely connected. In order to comprehend the text in a short time, the students need to perform different reading skill and strategies. If the students want to maximize their speed rate, they should know how to get the main idea from the text without reading every word. Firstly, the students can practise this skill in a material which does not contain language difficulties. After acquiring this ability, they change the easier material for more

difficult one. Consequently, the students should manage to read the texts without consulting new words with a dictionary. (Nuttall 1982, 35).

The speed rate plays an important role during testing. Thus, if the students acquire increasing reading fluency, it can significantly enhance their performance in the tests (Anderson 1999, 56). In order to handle reading speed, the students also need to perform the ability to deal with unknown words in the texts.

### 3.2.3. Identifying meaning from the context

During reading the texts EFL students usually come across many unfamiliar words, idiomatic expressions etc. or information they are not familiar with. This can lead to insufficient comprehension which has an apparent impact on the students' results in examinations in reading. In order to understand the text with unfamiliar words, the students have two options. Either they can skip the word without losing the gist of the text or they can guess the meaning of an unknown word.

The students can identify the meaning of an unknown word from its surroundings, expressions or from the context of the text. Some of the clues which help the students to figure out the meaning of unknown words can be punctuation clues, definition clues, contrast clues and comparison clues, structural clues and framework-based clues.

#### 3.2.3.1. Punctuation clues

The students can guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word with the help of punctuation clues. Unfamiliar words can be explained with the use of other words or clauses which have almost the same meaning. These words are recognized in the text by punctuation marks such as commas, dashes, brackets or parentheses. An example of punctuation clues can be demonstrated in the following sentence.



„I would like to know if this water is *potable*, able to be drunk.“

In this case, suppose the students do not know the meaning of the word in italics (*potable*). They can derive its meaning from the words given behind the comma (*able to be drunk*). These chunks of words give the clues to the students about an approximate meaning of the unknown word (*potable*).

### 3.2.3.2. Definition clues

Other clues which can help students guess the meaning of unknown words are called definition clues. Definition clues can be recognized as words which are followed or preceded by verbs functioning as linking. These verbs can be *seem*, *be*, etc. An example of definition clues is used in the following sentence.

“*Divergent thinking* is generating many different ideas in order to solve a problem“<sup>8</sup>

Suppose the students are not sure about the meaning of *divergent thinking*. They can identify the meaning from the definition clue which follows the linking verb *is*. In this example, *divergent thinking* means *generating many different ideas in order to solve a problem*.

### 3.2.3.3. Contrast and comparison clues

Contrast clues can also help the students to derivate an approximate meaning of an unknown word. The students can find two or more words in the text which are linked by discourse words such as *however*, *yet*, *but*, *although* emphasising contrast. If the students know the meaning of one word they are able to ascribe an approximate meaning to an unknown word. An example of contrast clues can be demonstrated in the following sentence.

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<sup>8</sup> Adapted from:< <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article863.htm>>

“My sister is extremely neat in appearance while she is *slovenly* in her housekeeping.”<sup>9</sup>

Assuming that the students know the word *neat*, they can deduce an approximate meaning *slovenly*. As it is used the connection word *while* which emphasises the contrast to *neat*, the students can derive the meaning of *slovenly* as dirty.

Unlike contrast clues, comparison clues help the students to find similarities between an unknown word and a known word. The words that are joined with connecting words such as *similarly*, *as well as*, *both*, *likewise* are typical for making comparisons. In the sentence below it is demonstrated the use of comparison clue.

“Miss Johnson is a *prim*, modest woman; likewise, many of her friends are very proper”<sup>10</sup>

Suppose the students did not know the meaning of *prim* and understood the word *proper*, they can make connection between these words on the basis of connecting word *likewise*.

#### 3.2.3.4. Structural clues

The students can use structural clues to define the type of word (grammatical category) which is represented by the unknown word. They do not get the exact meaning of the word. However, they are given clues which can help them to figure out the meaning (Nuttall 1982, 66-67).

Even if the students are sure about the meaning of the word given, they can encounter a situation when the word is represented by different part of speech.

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<sup>9</sup> Adapted from:< <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article863.htm>>

<sup>10</sup> Adapted from:< <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article863.htm>>

Consequently, the students can misunderstand the phrase such as : “ ....he shows her a well in his forehead.....”(Ediger at el 1999, 88). The students might know the word *well* as the adverb such as it used in this example “she signs *well* “(Ediger at el 1999, 88). However, in the example above the phrase contains indefinite article *a* which precedes the word *well*. As an indefinite article cannot be followed by an adverb, the students can recognize that a noun which the students deal with. Afterwards, the students can begin guessing the meaning.

### 3.2.3.5. Framework based clues

Other clues which the students can use in order to guess the meaning are called framework based clues. These clues are useful if the students know the meaning of surrounding sentences so that they can guess the meaning of an unknown word. In addition, they can also make use of the background information from the text. An example of framework based clues can be demonstrated in the following sentence.

“The angry driver shouted *vehemently* during his fight with the other driver”<sup>11</sup>

In order to get an approximate meaning of the word *vehemently* in the sentence above, the students can use framework based clues. In this case, they can derive the meaning from the word *angry* which deals with negative emotions. Thus, the students can figure out an approximate meaning that is closely connected to the expression of a strong emotion.

These clues help the students to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by means of employing information which is included in sentences or the whole text itself. To enhance their comprehension of the text, the students can also make inferences between the ideas.

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted from:< <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article863.htm>>

### 3.2.4. Making inferences

In order to comprehend the text appropriately, the students should read carefully and make inferences about the writer's ideas. Beech et al. explains to the students that "an inference is a judgment or conclusion that you make when you combine new information with what you already know" (1989, 14).

In other words, the students make a link between new information which appears in the text and their own knowledge. During making inferences it is necessary to employ thinking skills. In order to make an inference in reading, the students have to apply certain strategies in a prescribed order. According to Beech and collective the students should read the whole paragraph and think about its general meaning. Then they should list the facts which are mentioned in reading and compare them to their own knowledge of the topic. Finally, they can deduce the information and check their inference by asking if the facts support the students' thoughts (1989, 14). An example of making inferences can be demonstrated in the following situation.

"Suppose that a student Helen claims that she does not look at *Peanuts* or *Dennis the Menace* during reading the funnies. As the main characters in both these strips are children, the students may infer that Helen doesn't like comics about children" (Beech et al. 1989, 14).

The students link their own knowledge, in this case information about comics' characters, with Helen's statements. Afterwards, they are able to make an inference that she does not like comics about children. Another skill, which helps the student to understand the subject matter of a text, is utilizing non-text information.

### 3.2.5. Utilizing non-text information

The students can enhance their understanding of the text not only by reading the text itself. During examination in reading the students can encounter different non-text information which should be taken into consideration as well. According to Nuttall some examples of non-text information which the students can encounter in tests in reading can be:

- *spacing, indentation, layout:* These include spacing of letters within a word, spaces between lines, indentation (i.e. variation in width of the left-hand margin)
- *titles:* These non-text information involve use of titles to predict the content.
- *non-verbal material:* These include pictures, diagrams, graphs, tables etc. which are used as a preview for the content (1982, 42 – 51).

In order to help to predict the topic of the text, the students need to perform predictive skills. This means that the students make predictions on the basis of the non-text information and then guess the gist of the text given. If the students want to be successful at examinations in reading, they do not have to apply only reading skills and strategies but also test-taking strategies.

## 4. Test-taking strategies at higher education

The students can face a lot of difficulties while they are taking exams in reading at university. Generally, examinations are challenging but stressful for most of the students. The students are not only tested in their efficiency in completing reading tasks but also in their abilities to cope with the test itself. In order to pass the examinations in reading, the students have to acquire general test-taking skills as well as test-taking strategies which focus on reading.

### 4.1. General test-taking strategies

Examinations at university are very crucial because the results from these exams demonstrate the students' understanding of different subject matters. However, some students can fail the exams only due to their inability to take the exam effectively. Thus, in order to be successful in taking the exams, the students must perform test-taking strategies. General test-taking strategies can be divided into <sup>12</sup>

- *strategies before taking the test*: These include strategies which the students perform before they take the exam such as organizing time needed for completion of a test, going through the whole test first, dividing the questions into easier and more difficult ones, etc.
- *strategies during taking the test*: These consist of strategies which the students employ while they are taking the test such as reading the questions carefully, answering the easiest questions first, etc.

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<sup>12</sup> Adapted from Price et al 2010, 225

- *strategies after taking the test*: These include strategies which the students can perform after they have fulfilled the task such as going through the whole test again and check that all questions were answered, etc.

Furthermore, when the students get the results from the tests they should check their mistakes. It is essential to go through the whole test and recognize the types of mistakes. The students can also make errors which do not involve the subject matter of the text but the technical aspect of answering the tests such as marking more than one answer in the answer sheet, etc.

These strategies can be useful for the students in taking the exams at university in general and can be applied to any type of a test. However, the students should also be able to develop their strategies which are specific for the examinations in reading, which is the focus of the following chapter.

## 4.2. Test-taking strategies in examinations in reading

The students can encounter different reading tasks in examinations. Each of these tasks tests various reading skills which the students need to perform during the test. Reading test papers mostly consist of authentic materials which the students can find in real life, such as articles from newspapers, magazines or abstracts from novels. The texts can also be of different lengths and genre types. Common reading tasks which mostly appear in tests in reading can be multiple choice, true/false, matching and gapped texts (Burgess et al. 2005, 27).

### 4.2.1. Multiple choice

Multiple choice is a task which is frequently used in examinations. This task involves “a text (or texts), which can be of almost any type (narrative, argument, descriptive etc.) and genre (stories, letters, articles, signs etc.), accompanied by one

or more multiple choice items” (Burgess et al 2005, 27). The students have to choose the correct answer from three or four options out of which mostly only one answer is correct.

First of all, the students should look at the pictures, graphs, titles, etc. and go through the whole text. This helps the students activate their vocabulary and background knowledge of the subject matter. Afterwards, the students should read all multiple questions. For each question they should find appropriate passages in the text and underline the relevant information. According to the information which the students find in the text, they should choose the best option (Greenall et al. 1996, 59).

The students can encounter difficulties in recognizing a correct answer during examination. In order to succeed in this task the students have to apply the strategies which help them to remove incorrect answers. They should start with eliminating the options which seem to be incorrect at first sight. Consequently, the students decide among the options which are left. If the students still are not sure about the correct answer, they should guess it (Burgess et al. 2005, 27). Another testing task which the students can encounter in tests in reading is the true/false task.

#### 4.2.2. True/false tasks

True/false task is a similar type of task as multiple choice. The students also choose between alternatives. However, unlike multiple choice tasks, the students can decide only between two options. True/false task can be described as “a text or a group of texts accompanied by a series of statements” (Burgess et al. 2005, 27).

The students have to select which of the mentioned statements are correct. Each statement corresponds to either one part from the text or the whole text. True/false tasks are mostly based on two statements (true / false), but a third option



can be given as well (e.g. does not say). The third option is used when the answer is not evident from the text (Burgess et al. 2005, 28).

In order to complete true/false tasks the students have to apply various strategies. Firstly, they should start just as in multiple-choice tasks, with looking at the pictures, graphs, titles etc. and going through the whole text. Then it is essential to read the statements carefully to get their real meaning. Consequently, the students should scan the text and look for the key words from the questions. If the information in the sentence is clearly mentioned in the text, the answer is true. In the case that the fact from the statement is opposite to the fact in the text the answer is false. Finally, if the relevant information cannot be found in the text, the answer is not given.

The students can use clues which are included both in the text and in the statements to find the correct answer. These clues can be controlling words such as *always*, *never*, *all*, *some*, etc. which can help the students to derive the answer logically. For example, if the statement includes *all* (All people discuss the current issues about politics in our village) and the text says *some* (The political issues were discussed by *some* people in our village) the statement is false. Furthermore, the students can also find other clues. For example, if one part is not true, the whole statement is not true. Finally, if the students do not know the answer, they should guess it.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.2.3. Matching tasks

Matching is another type of testing task which can be used in examinations in reading. In matching tasks the students are asked to match a heading, statement or question completions to the main text. In order to complete the matching tasks, the

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<sup>13</sup> Adapted from:< <http://www.ieltsbuddy.com/true-false-not-given.html>>

students must understand the text properly. Therefore, they should look at the pictures, titles and topic sentences in the paragraphs. These are clues which give the students a general idea of the text. Afterwards, the students should read the text quickly and underline important information in the text. Consequently, they should start matching the obvious answers without reading the text in detail. If they are not sure about the answers, they should read the relevant part of the text more carefully. Finally, the answers which are left should be checked whether they really do fit in the text or not (Greenall et al 1996, 21). Another type of a reading task, when the students are required to match removed sections back into the main text, is gapped text task.

#### 4.2.4. Gapped text tasks

Gapped texts are “tasks involving texts (including text in charts and diagrams) from which single words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs have been removed” (Burgess et al. 2005, 28). In other words, the students have to insert sections which were removed from the main text. The students’ task is to reconstruct the original text so that it regains its logical structure. The students are required either to fill the gap with their own word(s) or choose the correct option from the given alternatives which is more common.

In the same way as in the above mentioned types of tasks, the students should skim the gapped texts to get main ideas and text type. Afterwards, the students can underline important information or key words and phrases. Then they should look carefully at each paragraph to find vocabulary links and structure clues. In addition, it can be useful to identify pronouns, nouns, determiners or possessive adjectives etc. in the text and in the removed sentences/ paragraphs/words from the text. On the

basis of these clues, the students should recognize references among paragraphs etc. This helps the students to regain the coherence of the texts.

Furthermore, the students must check the grammar part in the texts as well. The sentences/paragraphs, etc. which were inserted back in the text must fit in accordance with grammar rules such as number, tense, gender, etc. After filling all the answers, the students should look at the whole text and double check if the text makes sense in meaning as well as in grammar (Greenall et al 1995, 46).

The students have to prove their understanding of different reading skills and strategies in these testing tasks. In addition, they are tested in their abilities to perform them effectively. In all these types of test tasks the students must also apply general reading strategies and skills which are mentioned in the chapter two. What is exactly measured in reading tests?

#### 4.3. Assessment of reading competence

Each of these reading tasks is specially designed to test a particular reading skill or a combination of readings skills in several types of texts. Thus, the students have to adapt to reading different text types. Furthermore, the students have to recognize which of the skills they have to perform in order to complete the reading task.

According to Burgess et al. the students are mostly measured in understanding the main ideas, finding specific information and detail, understanding text structure and organization, understanding the meaning of specific words and understanding some implications.

Some reading tasks, such as multiple choice or matching, test the students in understanding the main ideas in the texts. In order to succeed in these tasks, the students are required to perform skimming and their ability to read for gist.

At the same time, multiple choice and matching tasks can also be designed to test the students in their skills to find specific information in the text. In order to complete these tasks, the students have to perform scanning which means the ability to find specific words in the text. The specific information can be in the text in a different form, for example synonyms, which the students have to recognize (Burgess et al. 2005, 29 – 33).

According to Burgess et al other testing tasks such as *gapped text tasks* measure the students' abilities to cope with several types of the texts. In other words, the students have to recognize the type of the text such as narratives, descriptions, etc., and its structure. The students have to prove that they are able to organize the text so that the text regains its meaning. They also have to understand the links between each paragraph, etc. (2005, 29 – 33).

These skills which are mentioned above are only examples from the wide range of reading skills used in examinations in reading. The students might come across other skills and tasks which are usually included in a test.

However, understanding and applying reading skills and strategies does not represent the only challenge in taking examinations at higher education. The EFL students have to face language barrier as well. In other words they have to prove that their language knowledge is sufficient enough to understand the reading materials and take the tests.

The findings from the literature review showed that the students have to understand and properly apply reading strategies and skills in order to successfully

complete reading tasks in EFL. In addition, the students have to employ test-taking strategies as well. Test-taking strategies help the students to accomplish tests more effectively because apart from reading a text, they have to react to a variety of tasks to prove that they understand them. Lastly, the EFL students also have to perform language skills which enable them to take a test in a foreign language. In other words, the students have to prove certain language proficiency.

On the basis of conclusion from the theory part, the following research questions were formulated.

1. How the students approach to tests in reading?
2. What strategies in reading do the students employ in reading tests?
3. Are the students aware of the importance of test-taking strategies?
4. Can this type of research map the students' common approaches and strategies to tests in reading?

## **5. Investigative project**

The first part of the Bachelor thesis focuses on some of the most common difficulties which the EFL students can encounter in examinations in reading. It consists of the summary of a number of key aspects within the field of reading and testing at higher education system.

The practical part of the final paper focuses on tests in reading from the EFL students' perspective. In order to receive the necessary information, research into the student's abilities to cope with reading tasks during examinations was carried out.

### **5.1. Aims of the research**

The essential goal of this research was to explore the students' problems that they have to cope with while taking tests in reading. Therefore, firstly the research aimed to map the students' approaches to testing in reading and their ways of managing the tests. This part focuses on the students' experiences with reading tests.

Secondly, the research intended to map reading strategies and skills which the students are able to apply in tests. This part also aimed to find out whether the students are aware of the importance of reading strategies and skills. In addition and which of them the students perform in reading tests.

The third goal of this research was to investigate whether the students are able to apply test-taking strategies and what range of skills and strategies the students employ.

Finally, it was assumed that the results from the above mentioned investigations would help to formulate suggestions for improvements in taking tests in reading.

## 5.2. Participants of the research

The targeted sample of respondents consisted of the students who study English as their major at higher education system. Forty eight students who participated in this research were the students of the Technical university of Liberec.

In order to get as relevant information for the research as possible, only the students who are studying English more than one year at university were asked. These students can be considered quite experienced in taking tests and therefore their answers valid.

## 5.3. Methodology

This study used a qualitative method research design as the main tool to collect data was a questionnaire and a descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaires. In order to ask as many students as possible, the questionnaires were distributed in two different ways.

Firstly, the students could fill the questionnaires online by using the application Google online questionnaire. Online distribution proved to be effective because the questionnaires were returned quickly. In addition, the answers were well-arranged and thus it was easier to evaluate the results of questionnaires. Forty five questionnaires were filled via the Internet.

Some of the questionnaires were also freely distributed among the students in face to face contact. Contrary to the online completion of the questionnaires, this method was not effective. One of the reasons was the difficulty in contacting the students face to face for completing the questionnaire because the students were occupied with their studies and they did not have enough time to complete them. Finally, only two from five questionnaires were not returned. In total three questionnaires were filled by using this method of distribution. Therefore, this

research is based on the analysis of the results obtained from forty eight questionnaires.

#### 5.4. Structure of the questionnaires

The questionnaire was designed by the author of the Bachelor Paper and it respects the basic criteria of Gavora (2000). The questionnaire consisted of eighteen questions which mapped the students' abilities to cope with reading tasks in examinations. These questions are divided into three parts so that they respect the procedure of taking a test, namely *before reading*, *during reading* and *after reading the text*.

At the same time, the questionnaire includes different types of questions such as open questions, half-closed questions, closed questions and scale questions. One type of questions is closed in which the students are limited in answering. In this questionnaire five questions are *dichotomous* with yes/no answer and one question offers more alternatives (a,b,c,d,..).

Another type of questions which is used in the questionnaire is half-open questions. The students either could choose from given alternatives or write their own relevant answer. The questionnaire includes seven half-closed questions. Furthermore, the questionnaire involves one open question which allows the students to write their own answer.

Lastly, four scale questions are used in the questionnaire. These are three *interval scale questions* and one *Likert scale questions*. Likert scale question maps the students' approaches to the subject matter. While interval scale question maps the frequency of the students' actions and situations.

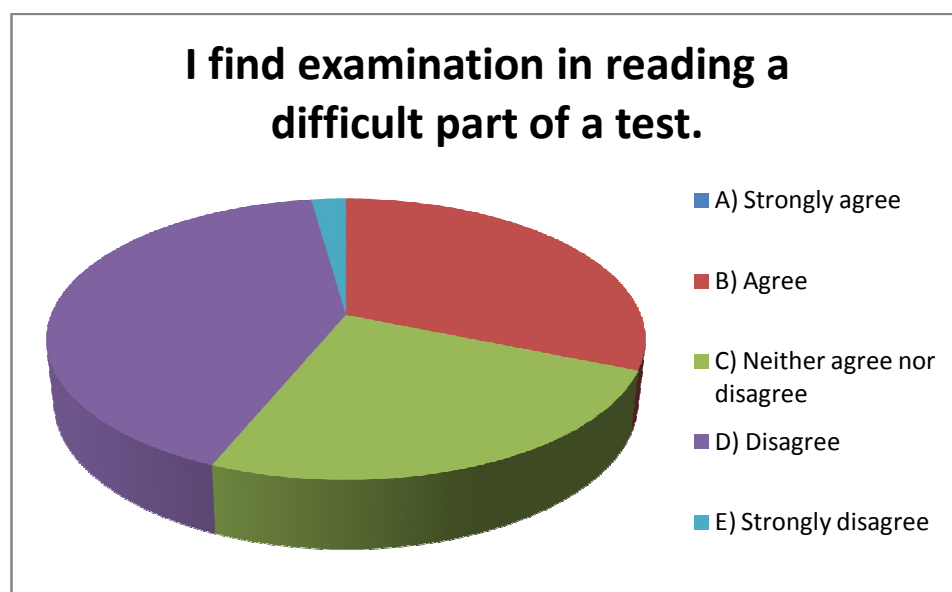


## 5.5. Results from the questionnaires

The data from the questionnaires were divided into four categories according to the structure of the questionnaire and in relation to the research questions. The occurrence of certain features was expressed numerically and their meaning finally explained.

### 5.5.1. Students' attitudes to reading tests

First of all, the students' approaches towards tests in reading were investigated. The aim was to explore whether reading presents a challenging testing-task in examinations in English during their studies at university. The students' answers show that their attitudes to examinations in reading are different which can be seen from the following graph.



Graph 1: Students' attitudes towards tests in reading.

42 % does not agree with the statement that testing reading is difficult. However for 31 % of the students reading is not easy either. 25 % of the students, who neither agree nor disagree, which might be influenced by the type of a particular test.

The different answers from the students most likely reflect the students' proficiency in both reading skills and the English language. In other words, the students who can employ reading skills and strategies effectively, do not find great difficulties in reading tests unlike those students who are not able to apply relevant techniques and strategies and, in addition, struggle with the English language.

The following part of the questionnaire, the research aimed to discover how the students prepare for tests in reading as preparation is crucial for enhancing the students' results in tests. The research shows that 32 % of the students do not prepare for examinations in reading at all. On the other hand more than half of the students (53 %) responded that they do reading exercises in textbooks in order to get used to reading tasks. 27,7 % of the responding students read magazines, newspapers and books in order to enlarge their vocabulary in English. Some students presented their own strategies they use to succeed. One of them mentioned that he / she "learns some new words which appeared in previous units of the textbook".

To conclude, most of the students prepare for examination in reading which is important for improving their language proficiency and consequently their results in tests. Firstly, the students get used to reading in English language. Secondly, the students can practise the same kind of testing tasks in reading which they can expect to find in tests. Both reasons underline the fact that preparation for reading is essential.

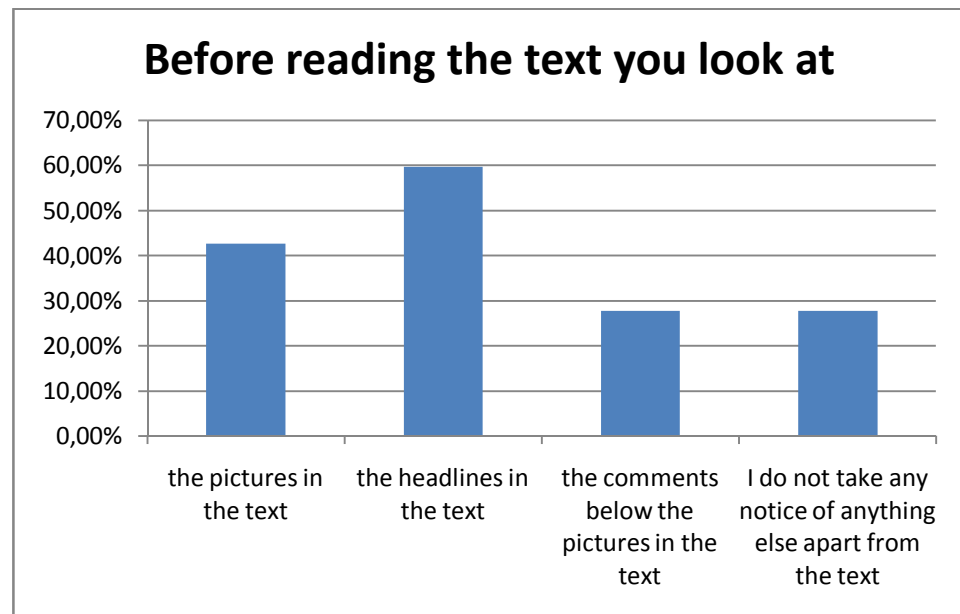
Finally, devoting their time to reading books, magazines and newspapers in English is also a very useful tactic because it does not only prepare them for a test in reading itself, but also improves their reading skills in general.

### 5.5.2. Students' behaviour before reading a text

On the basis of main findings from the literature that focus on strategic reading, the questionnaire aimed to explore what difficulties the students have before they start reading a text. In addition, the questionnaire investigated whether the students employ any strategies which can help them later in better comprehension.

As the students are required to read English texts, it can be assumed that the common obstacle is to understand instructions properly. In spite of this, most of the students (75 %) claim that they do not have any problems with understanding the instructions in general. It might be because the students are used to work on different reading tasks in their general language course where the instructions are usually formulated in the same way. The rest of the students respond that the instructions are usually not quite clear due to difficult language (20,8 %) or due to the complicated nature of the task itself (22,9 %). It might be because the students neglect preparation for the examination in reading, or alternatively, they are not proficient enough in English language. Thus the students found completing of reading tasks difficult.

In the following part of the questionnaire the students ascribed strategies which help them to understand the text before reading it. The most common ones are demonstrated in the illustration below.



Graph 2: Students' strategies employed before reading a text

60 % of the responders look at the headlines and 43 % of them look at the pictures in the text. In addition, 28 % responders mention that take into consideration the comments which are bellow the pictures in the text. Some students (28 %) admit that they do not take any notice of anything else apart from the text.

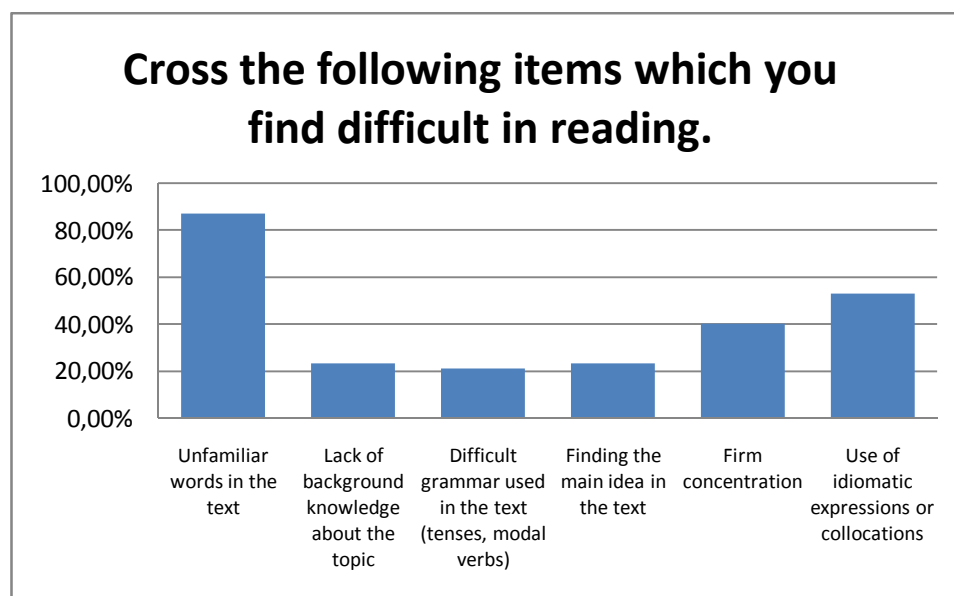
In order to activate vocabulary connected to the subject matter of a text, most of the students look at the headlines and pictures included in the text. These strategies help them to predict the message, which can help them activate their knowledge of the theme and vocabulary that they might expect in the text. Not only pictures can provide useful hints for the students to better understand a text, but also the comments below the pictures, graphs, tables, etc.

### 5.5.3. Students' behaviour during a test

The next part of the questionnaire aimed to find out the reasons of the main finding that the students do struggle with completing reading tasks in tests.

Particularly to find out what these difficulties involve and whether the students are able to apply suitable strategies to cope with them.

First of all it was important to map the main difficulties the students usually struggle with, which is illustrated in Figure 4.



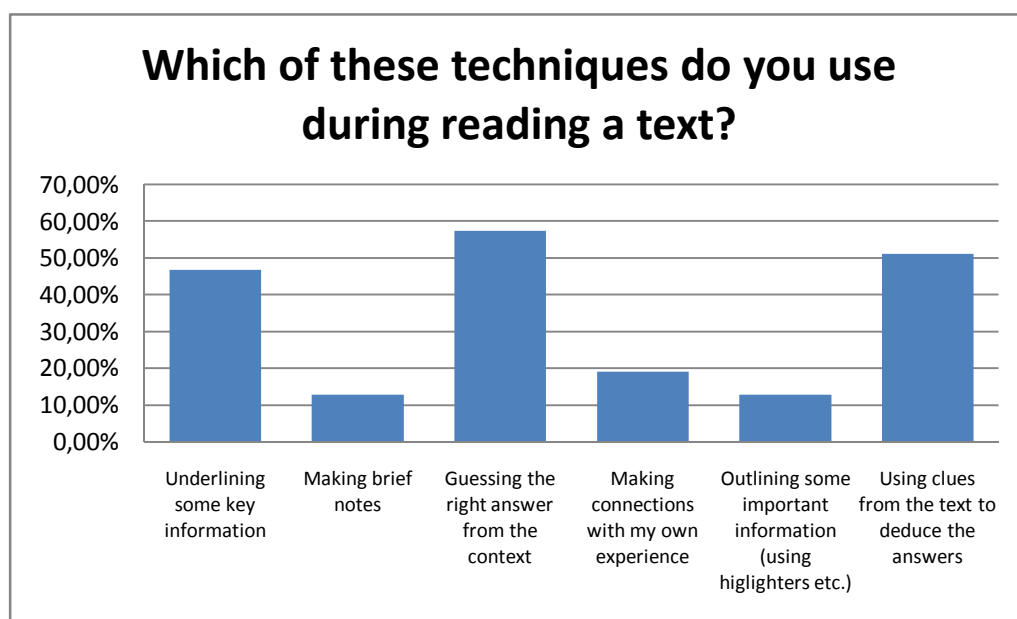
Graph 3: Common difficulties in tests

87 % of the students mentioned that one of the biggest obstacles during reading a text is coping with new unfamiliar words. Mostly the texts used in tests include a number of unknown words which are supposed to be unfamiliar to the students. Then the students have to show that they are able to guess the meaning of unknown words from context or understand the meaning of a text despite the fact that some words are not familiar to them. The same is valid for understanding idiomatic expressions or collocation which half of the students (53 %) marked as difficult as well.

In addition, 40 % of the students responded that it is difficult to maintain concentration on the text for the whole time of reading. Steady concentration is mostly lost during long, complicated or uninteresting readings. However, the students' abilities to remain focused and to employ reading strategies until they get through the whole text is another strategy that can help comprehend a text. Another

difficulty the students mentioned was lack of background knowledge about the topic (23%) or difficult grammar use (21 %).

The next aim of this part of the questionnaire was to explore whether the students employ any reading strategies during reading a text. The following statistics demonstrate some of the reading strategies mentioned in the questionnaires.



Graph 4: Reading strategies employed during reading a text

According to the results, 57 % of the students apply the strategy of guessing the right answer from the context, 51 % of them use clues from the text to deduce the answers and 47 % of them underline some key information in the text. These strategies were the most frequent ones.

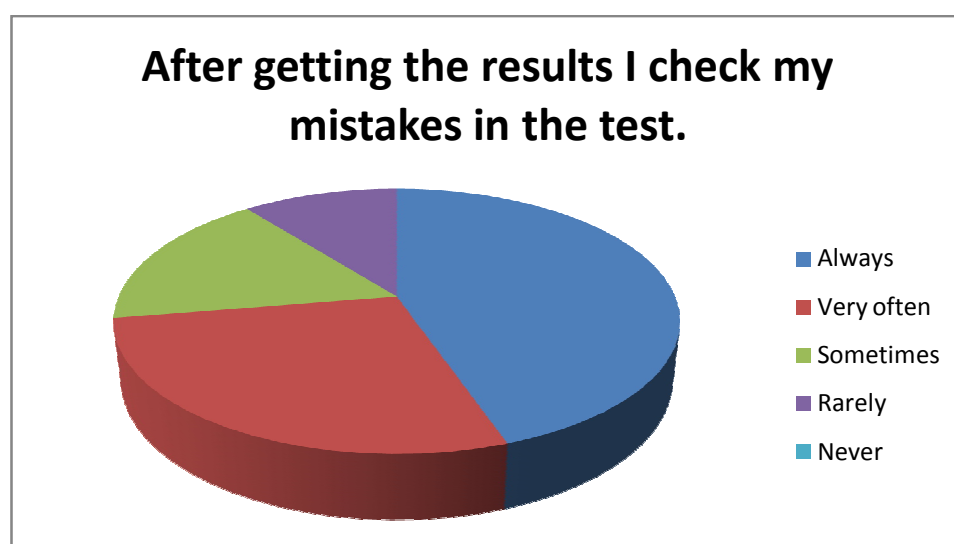
On the contrary, the students hardly ever make brief notes during reading a text (13%) and rarely outline some important information in the text (13%). Furthermore, the research explored that the students employ other reading strategies which make their reading effective. All of the students mentioned that they go through the text

more than once, 83 % of them double check if they really understand the text properly while reading it and 67 % of the students stop their reading in order to think about what they have already read.

The findings from this part of the questionnaire show that the students do employ different strategies in order to understand the text completely. It was also proved, that the students employ the strategies that are commonly practiced during their English language classes (i.e. guessing the right answer from the context, using clues from the text to deduce the answers, etc.), however, they are not aware of other strategies, such as making or outlining brief notes during reading a text. Combination of a variety of reading strategies enables the students to cope with different types of texts, or different tasks and facilitates understanding.

#### 5.5.4. Students' behaviour after a test

The final part of the questionnaire investigates the students' approaches to reviewing the exams. It aimed to discover whether the students learn from their mistakes in tests.



Graph 5: The students' attitudes towards revising the tests

In the illustration above it can be seen that the majority of the students check their mistakes in the test after getting the results (45 % always / 28 % very often). It is really important to identify the types of mistakes they make in order to avoid repeating them. Especially, if the students make technical mistakes such as marking more than one answer in the answer sheet, which corresponds to the next question in the questionnaire.

About half of the students mentioned that they had ever made some technical mistakes in their tests. 30 % of the students responded that they had forgotten to mark an answer and left a blank space, 19 % made some mistakes in copying the answers to the answer sheet and 6 % marked more than one answer. The students sometimes lose their points needlessly only due to some negligence. Therefore double checking the completion of a test is also a strategy that cannot be neglected.

At the end of the questionnaire the students had the opportunity to react to reading tests from their experiences. Some of the students' comments presented below indicate specific and rather exceptional situations:

“ The only problem I have is that I would need much more time for reading.”

“ Sometimes the text is hard to read due to printing.”

“ Usually I do not have any problems with these tests. But sometimes the topic and language is so confusing, that it is pretty hard to complete the test correctly.”

“ I do not like reading tests at all.”

“ I think that the topic of the text plays a big role and it influences the way how people manage it. I mean when the topic is interesting for me I have no problem to read it more than once and I usually remember things easier. But when the topic is not that interesting or even boring, I have a problem with concentration, I usually try



to answer as fast as possible just because the topic is boring and I want to have it done quickly.”

“Sometimes I have problems to concentrate on the texts if it is too long or if it is about a topic I am not interested in.”

## **6. Conclusion**

This BA paper attempted to examine the students' approaches to examinations in reading at higher education system. It focused on how the university students are prepared for EFL tests in reading and consequently for effective reading in general. The theoretical part, which summarizes the key aspects of reading competences needed for the successful completion of common EFL tests, creates the necessary framework for the practical investigation. The investigation was designed to map the students' approaches to testing in reading and their ways of managing the tests. In addition, it also investigated whether the students are aware of test-taking strategies and are able to apply them.

This thesis demonstrates that by changing students' attitudes to reading tests they can acquire better reading skills. It highlights the fact that underestimating the importance of reading and test-taking strategies is one of the most common pitfalls the students can fall into. The practical part presented the students' reflections on their test-taking experiences. It showed that the students are partly aware of some test-taking strategies and they apply them rather intuitively. These reflections can help university students to become aware of their most common shortcomings. As for the teachers concern, these results indicate the direction in which they should guide their students in general and during reading classes in particular. These findings can contribute to teaching and learning in two ways.

Firstly, this BA thesis can be used as a guide for students who are determined to improve their reading and test-taking skills. The theoretical part raises the students' awareness of the importance of reading itself and assists students in becoming more efficient readers. Moreover, it also boosts the students' awareness of test-taking strategies which play an indispensable part during tests. This awareness

leads to maximizing students' results in the exams during reading as the practical part demonstrates.

The second contribution of the thesis is to help teachers to prepare more suitable syllabus plans for exam preparatory courses in which reading is included as a part of testing as well. The thesis pointed out the main difficulties which the students encountered in examinations in reading so the collected data from the research can be applied for future exam preparatory and Practical Language classes. New syllabus plans could also play an important role for the enhancement of the students' results in examinations.

Finally, the research also implied directions for further investigation. The most essential research topics might include: comparison of the findings discussed in the BA paper and the students' results in tests, correlation between the students' reading competence and teaching instruction, or investigation in the students' learning styles and their reading competence.

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix 1: Students' questionnaire

#### Student questionnaire on reading comprehension test skills

Hello, I would like to ask you to help me to fill this questionnaire. The questionnaire is focused on investigating students' abilities to cope with reading tasks during foreign language reading exams at university. The questionnaire is anonymous and there is no right or wrong answer. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The information obtained will be used for the purposes of my Bachelor Thesis. Thank you very much for your help. Štěpánka Kobzová, a student of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year at faculty of education, English and Spanish for education.

**1) I find examination in reading a difficult part of a test (Circle only one option)**

- A) Strongly agree B) Agree C) Neither agree nor disagree D) Disagree  
E) Strongly disagree

**2) How do you prepare for a reading test? (More than one answer is possible)**

- ☐ Reading magazines, newspapers, books in English  
☐ Doing reading exercises in textbooks ☐ I do not prepare for reading tests at all  
☐ Others \_\_\_\_\_

#### BEFORE READING

**3) The instructions are usually (circle all the relevant answers):**

- a. clear for me  
b. not quite clear due to difficult language  
c. not quite clear due to the complicated task itself  
d. other reasons:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4) Before reading the text (circle only one option)**

- a. I usually go through all tasks  
b. I usually start working on the first task and then I continue one after another  
c. I usually start with the easiest task  
d. Others \_\_\_\_\_

5) Before reading the text do you look at .....(more than one answer is possible)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> the pictures in the text<br>else apart from the text | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not take any notice of anything |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the headlines in the text                            |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the comments below the pictures in the text          |   |

DURING READING

6) During examination I do not have enough time to read the text properly (circle only one option)

- A) Very often    B) Quite often    C) Sometimes    D) Rarely    E) Never

7) During examination I do not have enough time to do the task (circle only one option)

- A) Very often    B) Quite often    C) Sometimes    D) Rarely    E) Never

8) Which of these techniques do you use during reading a text? (more than one answer is possible)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Underlining some key information important        | <input type="checkbox"/> Outlining some information (using highlighters etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making brief notes the text to deduce the answers | <input type="checkbox"/> Using clues from                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guessing the right answer from the context        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making connections with my own experience         |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other strategies that can help me understand  |   |
-



**9) Which of these methods do you use during answering comprehension questions (a question that is based on reading some part from the text, more than one answer is possible)**

- a) Marking the first answer which you consider to be correct
- b) Elimination of questions which are less probable to be correct
- c) Search for the similar expressions from the question in the text
- d) Others \_\_\_\_\_

**10) Do you go through the text more than once?** Yes - No

**11) Do you quickly have a look at the whole text before reading it more deeply?**

Yes - No

**12) Do you stop to think about what you have already read?**

Yes - No

**13) Do you double-check your answers if you understand the text properly during reading it?**

Yes - No

**14) Do you try to predict what will be in the next part of reading?**

Yes - No

**15) Cross the following items which you find difficult in reading (it is possible to cross more than one answer)**

☐ Unfamiliar words in the text

☐ Firm concentration

☐ Lack of background knowledge about the topic

☐ Difficult grammar used in the text  
(tenses, modal verbs)

☐ Use of idiomatic expressions  
or collocations

☐ Finding the main idea in the text

☐ Others \_\_\_\_\_

AFTER THE READING TEST

**16) After getting the results I check my mistakes in the test. (circle only one option)**

A) Always    B) Very often    C) Sometimes    D) Rarely    E) Never

**17) Which of these mistakes (apart from incorrect answers) have you ever made in the reading test? (more than one option is possible)**

- a) Marking more than one answer in the answer sheet
- b) Forgetting to mark any question – leaving the blank space
- c) Making a mistake in copying the answers to the answer sheet (e.g. confusion in completing answers)
- d) Others \_\_\_\_\_
- e) none

**18) Any other comments on your own experiences with managing reading tests?**

Thank you very much for  
filling the questionnaire!